

IA Family

HANDBOOK



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What's IA Anyway?

Your Sailor is deploying – but not with a ship or a squadron, but as an “individual augmentee”. You probably have lots of questions and so does your Sailor! The Navy often sends Sailors to assist, or augment, a command when needed. Now the Navy is sending Sailors to assist the Army in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Most Sailors are going TAD to Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but they can be assigned all over the world.

In a few cases, active duty Sailors are selected for an IA assignment at the same time they are scheduled to transfer from their current Navy command. These Sailors are either extended at their current Navy command or issued Indeterminate Temporary Duty (ITDY) orders. ITDY orders detach the Sailor from their current Navy command and allow the opportunity for the Sailor to negotiate and accept orders during their IA assignment to their next Navy command and report upon completion of the IA assignment and authorized leave.

Reserve Sailors issued mobilization orders in direct support of GWOT are detached from their Reserve Center for the duration of the assignment. Upon demobilization the IA Sailor returns to their respective Reserve Center.

Your Sailor is temporarily assigned to duty (TAD). They may be TAD for a few months or a year or longer. An IA TAD assignment is counted towards sea duty time and not counted towards shore duty time. While on TAD your Sailor is still assigned to their Navy command and that is where you should go for questions about orders or other military questions. If your Sailor detached from his/her parent command and has not accepted orders to his/her next parent command, you can contact the Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center for information. More information is available on page 38. Your command ombudsman will be able to help you get answers to questions you have about your loved one's IA assignment.

Experienced deployers say planning, communication and knowing your resources are the keys to a successful deployment. This handbook provides basic information to help you in all three areas.



Your Sailor

Your Sailor should have at least sixty days to prepare for his/her IA assignment. There's a flurry of preparation activities during this time. Some of the activities every IA Sailor must complete include:

- A medical/dental check-up.
- Online Navy courses related to their IA assignment.
- Personal preparation.

Your Sailor may have conflicting feelings while preparing for assignment. He/she may feel stressed about all they need to do to prepare. They may feel guilty about leaving their family. They may be afraid. They also may be proud and excited to be able to support their country in the fight of the war on terrorism.

When preparation is finalized and according to the date on your Sailor's orders, they travel to a Navy Mobilization and Processing Site (NMPS) where everything is double checked to ensure your Sailor is ready to deploy.

Their next stop is additional training to make sure your Sailor is prepared to do his/her job. Training ranges from two weeks to six months depending on the requirements of their IA assignment. Most Sailors attend a two week long Combat Skills Training Course at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, which is an Army base. Some Sailors get additional job specific training before heading to their new temporary duty assignment.

Your Sailor remains attached to his/her "parent" command which is the command they were assigned to when they received temporary orders. Feel free to contact the command or the command ombudsman for any questions you may have.

R&R Leave

Rest and Recuperation (R&R) leave is chargeable leave available to give service members rest from a combat zone. There are two types of R&R leave:

1. A four day pass to safe locations near the theater of operations such as Camp Al Saliyah, Qatar.
2. A fifteen day pass out of the theater of operations.

R&R leave is a privilege, not an entitlement. Service members must be in theater for at least sixty days before they are allowed R&R

leave. R&R leave within the last sixty days of deployment is strongly discouraged.

Travel time to and from R&R leave is not charged as leave. Your Sailor's command is not allowed to have more than ten per cent of their personnel away at any time which may impact when your Sailor can take leave. Air travel is provided to the commercial air port closest to the R&R traveler's leave address. Leave begins to be charged the day after your Sailor arrives at the commercial airport closest to his/her leave address. Only one fifteen day trip will be authorized in a twelve month period.

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Ten Ways To Support Your Sailor During an IA Assignment

Family members who have supported their Sailor through an IA assignment offer the following suggestions:

- 1. Get organized** – The command will provide a checklist of items the Navy requires that must be done before your Sailor deploys. You can also create a checklist of items that need to be done to make this separation easier for you and your children. Go to www.ffsp.navy.mil and click on “deployment checklists” to get started.
- 2. Stay positive** – Long separations can seem unbearable. However, they do provide the opportunity for personal growth. Bolster each other’s confidence that you can make it through the separation.
- 3. Manage the home front** – Your Sailor will be able to focus on the mission and stay safer by knowing you can handle daily responsibilities such as finances, your home and vehicle.
- 4. Discuss solutions** – Invariably challenges will arise while you are separated. Try not to focus on problems, but identify possible solutions to problems.
- 5. Communicate** – Write letters, email, send pictures and care packages. Communicate regularly. Tell funny stories; send cartoons, forward uplifting quotes. Maintain your connection.
- 6. Take care of yourself** – Eat healthily. Exercise. Get plenty of rest. Stay physically and emotionally strong. Knowing you are healthy reduces your Sailor’s worries.
- 7. Care for your children** – Single parenting while your Sailor is de-

ployed is challenging, but again knowing their children are being well cared for reduces your Sailor's worries. This doesn't mean you should never go out and have fun. Quite the contrary. It's important to take time for yourself. Your children need a break from you occasionally too! Locate a wonderful child care provider and take a break from single parenting at least a few hours each week.

- 8. Tell your Sailor you love them** – Absence really does make the heart grow fonder. Make a point to tell your Sailor you love them every chance you get.
- 9. Watch for signs of stress** – You know your Sailor better than anyone else in the world. Pay attention to signs of stress while deployed or upon returning from an IA assignment. Although everyone has an off day or two, if your Sailor consistently seems moody, angry or depressed suggest they talk with a chaplain, contact Military One Source, Fleet and Family Support Center or the Veterans Administration. Contact information is at the end of this booklet.
- 10. Get help when you need it** – Supporting your Sailor, especially during an IA assignment in a combat zone, is challenging. The Navy knows this and has a number of programs and services to assist you. Don't let situations get out of control. Get help to prevent minor problems from becoming major ones.

Your Home

If something is going to go wrong during a deployment, most military spouses say it will involve the house or the car. Have your Sailor do as much preventive maintenance as possible. Make sure you have adequate insurance to cover the big things that can go wrong. Homeowners, rental, flood and car insurance can't eliminate any losses you might have, but they can make recovering from major losses easier.

*If something can go wrong,
it will go wrong.*

— *Murphy's law.*

Preplan where you will go in case you are required to evacuate your home during a disaster. Both you and your spouse will feel calmer knowing you have a plan and a place to go during a disaster such as a hurricane or

earthquake. Create an emergency preparedness kit. A basic kit includes:

- Flash lights or battery-powered lanterns and extra batteries and bulbs.
- First aid kit with any medications family members routinely take.
- Water – one gallon per family member. Store enough for five days.
- Food – nonperishable foods that don't need to be cooked or refrigerated. Store enough for five days. Don't forget food/water for pets.
- Portable radio and extra batteries.



TOP TIP

Make sure you have renter's/home-owner's insurance. If you live in an area that is prone to flooding, make sure you have flood insurance too.

“Honey Do List”

Although your Sailor has about a million things to do before they deploy ensure they complete routine maintenance and show you how to handle minor repairs. Create a “honey do list” of items that must be done before deployment. If you're in the middle of a renovation project try to complete it or at least make it usable. Washing dishes in the bathroom because the kitchen is being remodeled isn't much of a problem for a few days, but it can become a major aggravation after a few months.

Your spouse probably does a lot of routine maintenance around the house. Ask them to show you, or to write down, step by step instructions so you know how to do routine tasks such as:

- Change the air conditioner/furnace filter.
- Change the water filter.
- Start the lawnmower, put gas and oil into it.
- Reverse ceiling fans.
- Vacuum the refrigerator coils.
- Fix a leaking toilet.
- Reset circuit breakers.
- Deal with computer quirks.
- Hook up a new propane tank to the grill.
- Change smoke alarm/clock batteries.

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Ten Tips for Staying Safe at Home

Before your loved one leaves do a safety check of your house or apartment. Most police departments will do a walk through of your home and make recommendations to improve safety for no charge. Tips include:

- 1.** Place telephones with emergency numbers by your bed and near the place you sit most often.
- 2.** Always lock all doors and windows.
- 3.** Use a peephole to identify visitors before opening your door.
- 4.** Do not hide spare keys outside your home.
- 5.** Do not provide your house keys to service people.
- 6.** Do not invite strangers into your home.
- 7.** Avoid telling others about the valuables in your home. Crush boxes of high value items such as televisions and computers when you set the trash out.
- 8.** Make sure there is good lighting around the place where you park.
- 9.** Install motion detector lights around your house instead of just leaving lights on at night. The lights coming on and turning off attract the attention of neighbors. Install these lights at least 8 feet above the ground so they are more difficult to disable.
- 10.** If you have shrubs and bushes, select ones with thorns to deter potential intruders from hiding in them.

Extended Time Away

Many Navy spouses choose to go back home to live during a deployment or to go for an extended visit. If you're able to stay with parents or other families during the deployment it's a great way to save money by not having to pay household expenses. If you have young children, or if your children are out of school, it's also a great way for them to get to know grandparents and other family members better.

If you are planning to stay with family during the deployment, note that this is not covered in the military clause of most leases so there may be hefty financial penalties involved in breaking your lease.

When away from your house for several days or several weeks:

- If possible, have your telephone calls forwarded.
- Stop your newspaper and forward your mail.
- Have a plan in place to have the grass mowed or snow shoveled.
- Use a timer for lights.
- If you have a trusted neighbor tell them when you are going to be away and provide contact information.
- Ask your local police to check your home periodically.
- Contact TRICARE health care system at www.tricare.osd.mil when you're away from home for more than thirty days to ensure you maintain coverage.

Your Vehicles

Car payments, car repairs, car insurance and what to do if you don't have your own vehicle are items you must handle.

You need to know the basics:

- Whose name(s) is the vehicle registered under?
- Who is the insurance company and when is the next premium due?
- When is the payment to renew the license plates or tags due?
- Is an inspection sticker required, if so, often does must it be renewed?
- Are car payments made electronically or do you need to send a check each month?

Keeping 'Em Running

Ensure all routine maintenance is done prior to the deployment. Make sure you have the name of a trusted mechanic/repair garage and the schedule for upcoming maintenance due such as oil and filter changes and tire rotation.

Should your car need repairs and you don't have sufficient money to pay, Navy Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) may be able to assist with a no interest loan. If you are not living near a military installation contact the American Red Cross who acts as an agent for NMCRS in communities all over the United States. To find a local NMCRS go to <http://www.nmcrs.org> and to locate a local Red Cross office go to <http://www.redcross.org>.



*Walking isn't a lost art -
one must, by some means,
get to the garage*

— Evan Esar

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Ten Tips for Staying Safe on the Road

Whether driving long distance or around town practice these tips to ensure your safety on the road:

- 1.** Keep your doors locked, safety belts buckled and children safe and secure in properly installed safety seats.
- 2.** Don't let your gas tank fall below 1/3 tank.
- 3.** Stay on main roads and highways, and don't forget maps!
- 4.** Pack a flashlight, blanket and a first-aid kit. In cold climates, pack extra warm clothing.
- 5.** If you are going on a long trip, pack an emergency ration kit of water and nonperishable food items such as fruit or granola bars.
- 6.** When stopping for breaks, never let kids go to the restroom alone. Always lock vehicle doors, even if you'll only be gone for a few minutes.
- 7.** Carry a cell phone in case of emergencies.
- 8.** Do not stop to help a disabled vehicle. Instead, call for help from a pay phone or your cell phone.
- 9.** If stopping during night-time travel, choose a well-lighted, populated facility. Park where your vehicle can be seen.
- 10.** If approached by someone while your vehicle is stopped, keep your doors locked and only roll your window down enough to hear what the person is saying.

If Your Vehicle Breaks Down

You are vulnerable when your vehicle breaks down. It's important to be cautious even when a well meaning stranger offers assistance:

- Move your vehicle off the road safely away from traffic.
- Stay inside your vehicle, and make all passengers stay inside, too. Keep doors locked.
- If you can't move your vehicle off the road, ask all passengers to exit the vehicle when it is safe to do so, and stand away from traffic.
- If you must walk to a phone, keep your family together.
- Raise the vehicle's hood, tie a white cloth to a door handle or use reflective triangles or flares. Warning devices should be placed far enough away from the vehicle to give oncoming traffic time to react. A good rule of thumb is three devices at 100, 50 and 25 yards from the vehicle - or 300, 200 or 100 feet.
- Only roll down the window enough to ask any passersby to call police.

TOP TIP

Make sure you have the name of a trusted mechanic/repair garage.



Cell Phone Savvy on the Road

Cell phones increase your feeling of safety when driving but, while convenient, using cell phones and driving can be hazardous. The American Automobile Association offers these tips:

- Make sure your phone is placed where you can easily reach it while driving.
- Know all the operations of your cell phone and learn to use it without looking.
- Keep your attention on the road by programming frequently called numbers into the phone's memory to minimize dialing.
- Dial sensibly. Wait for a stoplight, pull off the road to dial or ask a passenger to dial for you.
- Be careful about where you stop to make calls.
- When calling 9-1-1 to report an emergency, be prepared to provide the closest major cross streets or off-ramps, and know your cellular phone number.
- Use your voice mail to take calls or leave yourself messages. Never take notes while driving.
- Use only hands free cell phones while driving on Navy bases.



Kids in Cars

Restraining children is not just a good idea. It's the law in all fifty states. Never hold a child on your lap. You could crush them in a crash, or the child may be torn from your arms. Restrain your children appropriately for their age, weight and height. Follow the directions that come with child safety seats as well as the child passenger directions in your vehicle's owner's manual. Ask your local police department, hospital or insurance company for a safety seat inspection as many seats are not correctly installed in vehicles. Children under twelve years old should sit in the back seat as air bags are made to protect adults and can harm children if they are activated.

Other vehicle safety tips for children include:

- Children can easily become restless or irritable when on the road. Try to keep them occupied by pointing out interesting sights along the way and by bringing soft, lightweight toys, DVDs if you have a player, and favorite CDs for a sing-along.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, even for a minute. Temperatures inside the car can reach deadly levels in minutes, and your child can die of heat stroke.
- Never allow children to ride in the cargo area of a station wagon, van, or pickup. Anyone riding in the cargo area could be thrown out and severely injured or killed.
- Always double check before backing out of your garage, driveway or parking space as children are hard to see.



Your Money

Talking about your budget, banking, taxes and important documents may seem like the last thing you want to do before your Sailor leaves, but having your financial affairs organized can give you some peace of mind.

Money is the opposite of the weather. Nobody talks about it, but everybody does something about it.

— Rebecca Johnson

IA Assignment Entitlements

Your Sailor may be entitled to some additional financial incentives during their IA assignment. Most IA assignment related entitlements start at the mobilization processing site. Some of these entitlements include:

- Hostile Fire Pay/Imminent Danger Pay.
- Combat Zone Tax Exclusion.
- Complete tax free pay enlisted/warrants. Officers up to allowable limit. Note: Social Security and Medicare are collected.
- Hardship Duty Pay.
- Incidental Expense per diem paid when lodging and meals are provided. This is in addition to full Basic Allowance for Subsistence. Monthly travel claims are required for payment.
- Family Separation Allowance.

Spending Plan

Setting up a spending plan is one of the smartest things you can do prior to a deployment or any time. A spending plan allows you to see where your money is going and to make adjustments as needed to meet your financial goals.

It's good to do a plan together so both you and your partner understand and agree to how finances will be handled during the deployment.

When setting up or updating your spending plan look at possible changes to your income:

- Will your Sailor earn any additional money for per diem, family separation allowance, combat duty pay, etc.?
- Will your Sailor be paid for a promotion during deployment?
- Will a reenlistment bonus be received during deployment?
- Will you be working longer or shorter hours?

Before the deployment ensure:

- Pay distribution is set up the way you want. Are direct deposits, any allotments or automatic check drafts established?
- How will your Sailor pay for their expenses? They are required to have a government travel card to pay for official expenses. Will they have a fixed amount each month they can access via personal check or debit card?

- Are you using joint or separate checking accounts? If joint, have you discussed how you will manage the account?
- Do you have overdraft protection for your checking accounts just in case?
- Are you prepared for recurring, but not monthly expenses such as tuition payments, car and home insurance?

Financial challenges:

- Do you have money saved in case of financial emergency?
- Have you considered asking your Sailor to sign a pre-authorization form with Navy Marine Corps Relief Society if your savings are minimal?
- Are you an authorized user of your Sailor's My Pay account?

Taxes:

- Will your Sailor be deployed during the tax season? If you file jointly you'll need to get a Special Power of Attorney for filing taxes or depositing the refund.
- Do you need an extension of the filing deadline?
- Do you need to file state income tax returns? You can contact the Internal Revenue Service at www.irs.gov for more information

Financial goals:

- If you have credit card balances are you working to pay it off?
- Have you and your Sailor discussed financial goals? Are you saving for emergencies, a new car, a house, a vacation?
- Is your Sailor enrolled in the Thrift Savings Plan?



Important Documents

Four key documents usually reviewed and updated if necessary before any deployment are:

1. Wills.
2. Powers of Attorney.
3. Service Members' Group Life Insurance.
4. Emergency Data Form.

Wills

A will is a legal expression or declaration of an individual's wishes upon their death. For couples with children it's important to include who you'd want to care for your children should something happen to both you and your Sailor. To ensure your estate is distributed how you want, make sure you have a current will and your loved ones know its location. Your local Navy Legal Services Office will assist you in making a will at no cost.

Powers of Attorney

Powers of Attorney can be very useful when conducting personal business. They can also be very dangerous documents as they allow someone to act in your behalf. When your Sailor is deployed you may need different types of Powers of Attorney for different tasks. For example, you may need a special Power of Attorney to file your taxes or for you or to buy or sell a big ticket item such as a vehicle or condo. There is a document called a "General Power of Attorney" that can be used in a variety of situations. You need to

know in advance what type of Power of Attorney will be accepted by an institution you want to do business with. Not all will accept a General Power of Attorney. Your local Navy Legal Services Office can discuss options and draw up a Power of Attorney at no charge.

Service members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI)

Active duty service members are eligible to be insured under SGLI up to a maximum of \$400,000 in increments of \$50,000. Before deploying you should ask your Sailor to verify who they have designated as beneficiary and make changes as necessary. A will does not impact who is the beneficiary of life insurance. To make changes Election Form (VA Form SGLV-8286) must be completed. For more information on Service Member's Group Life Insurance visit the Department of Veterans Group Life Insurance information page at <http://www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/default.htm>.

Emergency Data Form

The Emergency Data Form is more commonly referred to as the "Page Two" of your Sailor's Service Record. Your Sailor provides information about who should be contacted if they become ill, are injured, killed or missing so you can see how important it is to ensure your address and phone number are accurate. If you leave the area for an extended period of time, or move, contact your command ombudsman and provide your current contact information.

Other Important Documents

If you don't already have one it's a good idea to invest in a small, fire proof safe or rent a safety deposit box to store your family's important documents. Many of these documents are hard to replace. Even though you don't need them often, when you do need them they are critical.

Do you know where each of the following documents is located?

- Birth Certificates.
- Marriage License.
- Divorce Decrees.
- Death Certificates.
- Medical Records of each Family Member.
- Dental Records of each Family Member.
- Veterinarian Records for each Pet.
- Adoption Papers.
- Citizenship/Naturalization Papers.
- Passports/Visas.
- Insurance Policies (Life, Health, Home, Vehicle, Flood).
- Real Estate Documents (Lease, Deed, First and Second Mortgages).
- Car Title, Registration and Inspection.
- Most Recent Leave and Earnings Statement (LES).
- Social Security Number of each Family Member.
- Current Address and Phone Number of Immediate Family Members of both Spouses.
- Wills.
- Power Of Attorney(s).



TOP TIP

Organize all of your important papers, make a copy, and store the originals and copies separately in a safe place.

Your Emotions

Sailors have been deploying and their loved ones have awaited their return over the centuries, but waiting can be hard. It's not just day-to-day chores and responsibilities that you must handle on your own, but the roller

coaster of emotions you have to deal with. You're proud of your Sailor, but angry they must deploy. You may worry that you can handle the additional responsibilities, yet are confident you can. You fear for your loved one's safety and your heart aches for their return.

*For it was not into my ear
you whispered, but into my
heart. It was not my lips you
kissed, but my soul.*

– Judy Garland

Emotional Ups and Downs of Deployment

Lots of research has been done to understand the common feelings Sailors and their families experience when separated from each other due to a military assignment. You may experience similar feelings or your reactions may be very different. There is no such thing as a “right” or “wrong” feeling. If you find you're feelings are getting in the way of you doing the things you need to do – caring for children, going to work or school, taking care of the house – don't hesitate to contact your Fleet and Family Support Center, a chaplain or Military One Source for assistance. Their numbers are listed in the back of this handbook.

Anticipation of Loss

Anticipating loss occurs before deployment. It's a time of tension and confusing emotions. For IA deployments it seems like this phase is a never-ending series of command checkout actions required to deploy overseas.

You may be angry and resentful of the hours required to get ready for departure. You may or may not talk about your fear for your Sailor's safety associated with many IA assignments. Service members feel guilty that they are leaving their families. Arguments and bickering are common. Although irritating, it can be a way for you to distance emotionally in preparation for the separation.

Detachment and Withdrawal

Occurring a day or two before deployment, in many ways this can be the most difficult time. You stop sharing thoughts and feelings with each other. This is a natural response as separation is imminent. Although physically together, you are separated emotionally. This can be especially difficult if it is seen as rejection rather than as a reaction to trying circumstances. Often non-deploying spouses think, “If you have to go, go.” And Sailors think, “Let's get on with it!”



TOP TIP

Acknowledge your feelings.
Respect your feelings. Don't let them overwhelm you. Get help if needed.

Emotional Disorganization

Once your Sailor leaves you may feel an initial sense of relief followed by guilt. You may feel disorganized, depressed, or restless. Old routines have been disrupted and new ones not yet established. It's not unusual to feel overwhelmed as you face total responsibility for family affairs. Give yourself a few weeks and you'll begin to feel more in control.

How's Your Attitude?

While feelings can be difficult to control, it is easier to manage your thoughts and attitude towards this IA assignment. Attitude is the state of mind with which you approach a situation. Why is your attitude important? It affects how you look, what you say and what you do. It affects how you feel both physically and emotionally. It largely affects how successful you are in achieving your purpose in life. While talent is helpful and knowledge is essential, the most important key to success in any endeavor is your state of mind.

With an IA assignment or anything in life you have a choice to make. You can apply a positive attitude and make the best of a situation or you can apply a negative attitude, withdraw and complain.

Recovery

At some point during the deployment, new routines are established. You feel more comfortable with the reorganization of roles and responsibilities. New sources of support and a new sense of independence and freedom are developed.



Approaching life with a positive attitude is healthier for you and those around you. Make a list of goals you can achieve during this separation and what steps you need to take to reach them. Set mini goals for every day, next week and next month. Completion of goals gives you a sense of satisfaction and confidence to achieve more.

Learn to recognize when you are having negative thoughts, self-doubts or feeling overwhelmed. Your body sends signals. You may have a hard time sleeping, eat too much or too little, have a short attention span, are jumpy, grouchy or irritable. Pay attention to your body's signals and nip negativity before it impacts you.

Proven Stress Busters

Even if you've experienced deployment before you may be uneasy about an IA deployment. IA deployments are often longer, there is the element of fear and danger, and you may feel isolated from friends who are not sharing the same experiences. Expect stress and worry and plan for it.

- **Do something you enjoy.** At least once per week – preferably daily – do something fun. It may be something as simple as reading a book or listening to music.
- **Get involved.** Work, go to church services, participate in organized volunteer opportunities, take classes, do more with your children.
- **Stay active.** Exercise is the body's natural stress reducer. Ride your bike, go to the gym, take the kids and dog for a walk. Get moving!
- **Avoid using drugs, alcohol and nicotine.** While they dull the perception of stress, they don't eliminate it.
- **Accept that you can't control everything.** You can control your reaction. Let your kids wear mismatched outfits. So the house isn't spotless. You have to renegotiate a deadline at work. You didn't get an email or letter today.
- **Laugh.** Hang out with people who are fun. Watch comedies. Read the comic pages. Listen to and tell jokes.
- **Celebrate success.** Focus on what you're doing right. Everyone makes mistakes. Learn from them and move on. Use positive self-talk.
- **Allow yourself to worry and feel sad.** However, allow only fifteen to thirty minutes per day. Schedule worry time if necessary. That way when negative feelings creep up during the day you can say to yourself, "I'll have time to think about that later."
- **Ask for help when you need it.** Friends, family, colleagues care about you. Everyone can use a hand at times.



TOP TIP

Nurture yourself, your Sailor and your family during deployment.

Remember, it is normal to feel a certain amount of stress or worry whenever you face a new situation. If your feelings prevent you from managing your day-to-day responsibilities get help. Contact your Fleet and Family Support Center, a chaplain, or Military One Source.

10

Ten Ways to Stay Busy During an IA Assignment

Do not put your life “on hold” until your Sailor returns. You may grow to resent your Sailor. Additionally, you’ll have more interesting conversations and send more entertaining letters and emails if you are active and involved during your separation. Finally, time goes by faster when you’re busy.

- 1. Create a list** – Before your Sailor even leaves create a list of things to do. If you have children include plans for them. Get your calendar out and schedule as many of these activities as you can.
- 2. Join a Family Readiness Group** – Get involved with a Family Readiness Group. Join an Army, Air Force or Marine Corps sponsored group if you don’t live near a Navy base. Start, or join a group of other IA spouses. Find a virtual group on the Internet. This is a great way to meet other military spouses, to feel “understood” and to be supported during your Sailor’s absence.
- 3. Work** – If you already have a job, this is a great time focus on working toward career goals. If you do not have a job, but would like one, contact your local Fleet and Family Support Center in person, via the telephone or by Internet as they can help you assess your skills, create a resume, do a job search and prepare for interviews – all at no cost!
- 4. Volunteer** – It can be easy to slip into self-pity and sadness when your Sailor is gone, but if you reach out to help others you will constantly be reminded of your good fortune. Assist battered spouses, deliver meals to the elderly, deliver books to patients in the hospital, care for homeless kittens and puppies, or help disaster victims rebuild their lives.

- 5. Be more involved at church** – Contact your pastor and let them know you'd like to be more involved. You can teach Sunday/vacation bible school, greet parishioners, staff the nursery, provide readings during the service, and participate in study groups. While you give you'll also receive support.
- 6. Get fit** – While your Sailor is deployed is the perfect time to get into the best shape of your life. Work out everyday. Join a gym. Get a personal trainer. Take aerobic, Pilates, yoga classes. Dazzle your Sailor upon their return!
- 7. Redecorate** – Whether it's an extreme makeover or simply painting and rearranging furniture sprucing up your house or apartment can be very satisfying. Watch home decorating channels. Wander through home furnishing departments. Review decorating books and magazines to create a home fit for a queen or king for you and your Sailor.
- 8. Travel** – Visit family, a college room mate or your best friend from school.
- 9. Add to your education** – Take a class or complete a degree. Many Navy family members say it's easier to study when their Sailor is deployed.
- 10. Have fun** – Try to do something you enjoy everyday as time flies when you're having fun. It may be something as simple as chatting on the phone with a friend, surfing the web, reading a book or taking a walk or something as elaborate as planning a trip or creating a masterpiece.

Media and Navy Families

When your loved one is thousands of miles from home television news reports can seem like a lifeline, but media reports can also be a burden as reports are not always accurate and can cause you to worry. The most accurate news comes from military sources. Contact your command ombudsman any time you hear a report concerning your spouse's unit to verify it.

It's also a good idea to limit how much news you watch and listen to. Very few "good news" stories are aired. Hour after hour of listening to bad news drains anyone. Allow yourself to only watch fifteen to thirty minutes of news each day.

Preferably watch major news channels that are more likely to verify the information reported or inform you the information has not been verified.

If anything should happen to your loved one you will receive an in-person notice. That's why it is important to ensure the command and your ombudsman have your most up-to-date address and telephone number.

Sometimes news reporters want to talk with family members of service members. You are entitled to talk with reporters if you would like or to simply say "No thank you."



TOP TIP

If you move, change your telephone number or email address make sure your command ombudsman has your new information.



10

Ten Tips for Dealing with the Media

- 1.** Not all reporters are alike. Some try to get you to say something that you might regret later.
- 2.** Before answering questions, jot down the reporter's name, telephone number, and the name of his or her news organization. Do this even if you're going to decline to comment. It will discourage the reporter from persisting after you say no.
- 3.** Know who will hear you. Even family members might have information useful to opposing forces.
- 4.** If you have been misquoted or misrepresented by the press, it is best to do nothing about it unless it is a serious matter, in which case, contact the Public Affairs Office (PAO) on base.
- 5.** When you are enthusiastic about your spouse's mission, your response can build morale and show American resolve.
- 6.** Don't speculate. It is best not to talk about anything of which you do not have first-hand knowledge. There is nothing wrong with saying, "I don't know," in response to questions.
- 7.** If your spouse calls home with information about how the mission is going or homecoming dates, keep it to yourself. Some of what your spouse tells you could be sensitive, wrong, or subject to change.
- 8.** Understand that it is not harassment when the media calls you at home or stops you at the supermarket to ask for an interview. Only when they persist, after having been told "No," does it become harassment.
- 9.** Should you become inundated with press/crank calls because your spouse's name appears in the media, it's advisable to have an answering machine.
- 10.** When in doubt, call the base Public Affairs Officer for advice. Call the base operator to get the number for the base PAO.

Your Family

To enable you and your loved one to grow together emotionally even though you are physically apart requires commitment and communication.

*You can kiss your family and
friends good-bye and put
miles between you, but at the
same time you carry them
with you in your heart, your
mind, your stomach, because
you do not just live in a world
but a world lives in you.*

— Frederick Buechner

Keep Your Relationship Strong

Successful marriages don't just happen – they require constant commitment. Military couples who have successful relationships offer the following suggestions for keeping your relationship strong:

- **Military life and marriage are voluntary choices.** Couples who keep this fact in mind are better able to deal with resentment that may occur when they feel they lack control of their circumstances.
- **A team approach.** Successful couples embrace the military as their chosen lifestyle, not just the job of the service member. They believe success requires active engagement of both partners.
- **Mutual respect and appreciation.** The “jobs” of both the military member and the military spouse are difficult and challenging and successful couples appreciate that and are committed to the success of each other.
- **A realistic perspective of military life.** Successful couples see their military journey as one chapter of their life together – even for those who make the military a career. Successful couples accept the benefits and challenges of military life and maintain a realistic perspective of their time as a military family.
- **A desire to be prepared.** Successful military couples took marriage preparation seriously from the beginning and continue to take advantage of marriage retreats, parenting programs, deployment briefings and other programs to strengthen their relationship and prepare for challenges together.
- **A network of friends.** Support through individual and joint friends helps provide support for the couple, particularly during deployments. Individual and joint friendships help provide support particularly during deployments.



- **Trust in each other.** Trust is essential to a successful relationship. It is nurtured when you are together and apart.
- **Frequent, honest communication.** While frequent communication may be difficult during an IA deployment, technological advances have made it easier. An important aspect of communication is to understand the other person and attempt to convey thoughts and feelings in a way the other partner will hear and appreciate.

Children and Deployment

Don't assume your child is aware and understands that a parent is deploying. Be sure to tell your child about the upcoming deployment. Reassure them that they will be cared for while mom or dad is away. Encourage them to ask any questions they might have.

Allow children to miss their parent and to feel sad about their absence. Encourage communication with your child and allow them to express any feelings they may have. Children are often confused, angry, worried and feel insecure. It is important for you to try to maintain your child's daily routine and be consistent in discipline.

Most Navy kids are resilient and will bounce back. If your child is struggling, don't hesitate to contact your child's school counselor, the Fleet and Family Support Center, a chaplain or Military One Source for assistance.



Age	What to Expect	Ways to Help
<p>Infants & Toddlers</p> 	<p>They may seem fussier, clingy, may eat less and have trouble sleeping.</p>	<p>Have your spouse record video/audio taped stories.</p> <p>Post pictures of deployed parent.</p> <p>Provide extra hugs and cuddles.</p> <p>Maintain routine.</p> <p>Take care of yourself to be better able to care for children.</p>
<p>Preschoolers</p>	<p>May feel their behavior caused their parent to leave.</p> <p>May become more fearful/irritable.</p> <p>May regress in potty training/thumb sucking/etc.</p> <p>May have trouble sleeping.</p>	<p>Have your spouse record video/audio taped stories.</p> <p>Create a waterproof photo album or picture book of deployed parent and child doing things together.</p> <p>Provide extra hugs and cuddles.</p> <p>Maintain routine.</p> <p>Allow child to sleep in your bed if you're comfortable with that. Be sure to move them back to their own bed a few weeks before their parent's return.</p>
<p>School-age</p> 	<p>May see a decline in school performance.</p> <p>More irritable or moody.</p> <p>May worry about deployed parent's safety.</p>	<p>Have family discussion before deployment.</p> <p>Involve teachers, church, neighbors. Enroll in Big Brother/Sister Program.</p> <p>Schedule fun activities.</p> <p>Encourage deployed parent to communicate regularly.</p> <p>Reassure about safety training/drills/equipment.</p> <p>Encourage child and deployed parent to play games via email/regular mail.</p> <p>Help child compile care packages to send to deployed parent.</p> <p>Limit viewing of TV news about the war.</p> <p>Assist your child to send care packages, letters and cards to their parent and others serving.</p>
<p>Teens</p>	<p>May be ambivalent.</p> <p>May be moody/withdrawn.</p> <p>May test rules.</p>	<p>Don't make teen responsible for deployed parent's role.</p> <p>Maintain rules, curfew, discipline.</p> <p>Encourage deployed parent to communicate regularly.</p>

Stay Connected

Communication can be challenging during an IA deployment because your Sailor may not be near telephones or computers. Mail service can take weeks at times. Don't let that deter you. Any Sailor will tell you there is not a better day brightener than hearing from loved ones back home.

No news is often good news. It means your Sailor is hard at work. However, if more than a month or so goes by with no mail, emails or telephone calls you can contact the American Red Cross at www.arc.org and request a "health and welfare" message be sent to your loved one.

Know that if your loved one is ever injured or missing from duty, the Navy will contact you in person to inform you of their status.

Email

Quick and easy, email is great for staying in touch. Discuss email expectations prior to deploying:

- Will email be readily available?
- If so, how often will you send emails?
- What address do you use?

Email is not a great way to communicate when you're angry or upset. If you really have a need to get your feelings off your chest, go ahead and write the email, but save it for 24 hours and reread before you send. It's usually best to communicate strong feelings over the

phone when you can't do it in person. Also, remember, emails are not confidential. They may be seen by others. Be careful what you write.

Letters

Letters, while taking longer to receive, are a more personal way to communicate. Many couples save their "love letters" from a deployment. Not many save emails. It's a good idea to number letters as they don't always arrive in the order they are written.

Ensure you have your Sailor's full mailing address. Create a "mail kit" with cards, wonderful stationery, pens, sticker, stamps, etc. to make letter writing easy and enjoyable.

Letters don't have to be long. Don't worry about grammar or spelling. Write letters about your daily existence, your plans for the future, and your thoughts and feelings to help maintain your emotional connection and make it easier to reunite at homecoming.



Telephone Calls

Telephone calls can bring the greatest emotional highs as well as lows. It's wonderful to hear your loved ones voice and talk in the here and now, but sadness can briefly overwhelm you when you hang up and realize how much you miss your loved one. Make the most of your telephone conversations:

- Keep a written list of things you want to talk about.
- Try to stay positive and upbeat. At least try to end each call on a positive note.
- Talk about your daily activities to make it easier to reconnect at homecoming.
- Suggest to older children that they keep a list of things to tell their parent when they call.
- If you share bad news make sure someone is available to provide emotional support to your loved one.
- Talk about plans for homecoming and future activities.
- Discuss problems and solutions, but don't spend the entire call talking about them.
- Tell your loved one you love them and appreciate their sacrifices.

Pictures, Video Recordings and Video Teleconferencing

While letters and emails are nice, there is nothing better than seeing your Sailor. If your loved one has access to a DVD player make recordings of life at home and ask them to do the same for you. Realize that privacy is at a premium so be discreet when sending videos and pictures.

Send pictures of yourself, family members, any new items you purchase or the new furniture arrangement. If you have children or are an expectant parent pictures are even more important as children grow and change quickly.

If you have the opportunity to do video teleconferencing with your Sailor it might be helpful to jot down a few items you'd like to talk about, have the children sing a song or do a family skit. It's not so much what you say, but the fact that you cared to get dressed up and put effort into brightening your loved one's day that will be remembered.



Care Packages

Who doesn't like to receive a present in the mail? Care packages are presents from home. While most items Sailors need are provided to them, items that make their life more comfortable are not. Encourage moms, grandmothers, church groups, and friends to send care packages to your Sailor as they may welcome the opportunity to show support. Remind people there are some things that shouldn't be sent. Grandma's chocolate chip cookies may be the best in the world, but when they travel 9,000 miles, through the desert during a month- long journey, they might not be as flavorful.

Frequently requested care package items include:

CDs

Hand sanitizers

Sunglasses

Telephone calling cards

Shampoo

Sunscreen

Bug repellent

Tooth paste/mouth wash

Gum

Books/reading material

Underwear/t-shirts

Packaged candy/cookies



OPSEC

Operation Security or OPSEC is keeping potential adversaries from discovering sensitive Department of Defense information. As the name suggests, it protects US operations - planned, in progress and those completed. Success depends on secrecy and surprise, so the military can accomplish the mission more quickly and with less risk. Enemies of freedom want this information, and they see Sailors and their families as potential information sources.

Types of sensitive information:

- Unit mission or the number of personnel assigned.
- Locations and times of deployments.
- Unit morale or personnel problems.
- Security procedures.
- Troop movement.
- Military intentions, capabilities or operations.

Don't:

- Talk about sensitive information in public settings such as the club, commissary, Navy Exchange or in the community.
- Talk about sensitive information over the telephone.
- Post pictures or information on web sites or blogs.
- Include sensitive information in emails or attachments.
- Write about sensitive information in newsletters.
- Neglect to shred excess paper involving information on operations.
- Try to talk around classified information – it is extremely difficult to outsmart experienced intelligence analysts.



Combat and Operational Stress

Your Sailor may sound different when he/she calls home or while home on R&R leave due to stress. Feeling stress in a war zone is, as one Navy psychiatrist said, “a normal reaction by a normal person to an abnormal, horrific situation.” The stress helps your loved one brace for danger. Your Sailor can sometimes witness an event so severe or experience a threat so prolonged that their body may continue to maintain in that state of high alert long afterwards, when their body and mind need to rest.

Stress from a single event, from a series of events, or from a continuous stressful situation can cause a wide range of reactions, including:

- Brief combat stress reactions, which can range from exhaustion to hallucinations.
- Behavior changes, which can range from recklessness to brutality.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which includes persistent re-experiencing of the events, avoidance of reminders, and hyper-arousal.

The signs that someone is suffering from combat stress can be physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral. Just having certain symptoms does not mean necessarily your Sailor needs help. Some of these signs can be a normal reaction. This normal reaction can last from a few days to a few weeks.

Here are some of the possible signs of a combat reaction. (The first two items in each list are generally earlier warning signs.)

Physical signs

- Exhaustion.
- Inability to fall asleep or stay asleep.
- Sweating, heart pounding.
- Nausea, frequent urination, or diarrhea.
- Jitters, trembling, or jumpiness.
- Numbness, tingling, or total loss of function of limbs or other body parts.

Mental signs

- Difficulty concentrating, confusion.
- Inability to make decisions, to process information.
- Nightmares.
- Memory loss.
- Flashbacks, reliving the trauma.
- Loss of a sense of what is real.
- Hallucinations or delusions (not taken care of by adequate sleep).

Emotional signs

- Fear, worry, extreme nervousness.
- Irritability, anger.
- Mood swings.
- Despair and sadness.
- Feelings of isolation.

Behavioral signs

- Carelessness or recklessness.
- Outbursts of anger or aggressiveness.
- Staring into space, sometimes called the “thousand-yard stare”.
- Inability to do their job.
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs.
- Misconduct or crime.
- Complete unresponsiveness to others.

Encourage your loved one to get help if they experience these reactions. There is no shame to seeking help in dealing with combat and operational stress. Suggest you Sailor talk to a doctor, corpsman or chaplain while deployed. If at home, they can also contact:

- A counselor at your Fleet and Family Support Center at www.ffsp.navy.mil.
- A chaplain.
- Military One Source at <http://www.militaryonesource.com>.
- The Veterans Administration at 800-827-1000 or www.va.gov.



Help When You Need It

It is possible you will have questions, concerns or a family emergency at some point during the deployment. There are some things you can do to prepare for an emergency such as:

- Have money saved for emergencies.
- Considered having your Sailor sign a pre-authorization form with Navy Marine Corps Relief Society in case of financial emergency.
- Make sure your extended family members know your Sailor's rate/rank, command name and mailing address.
- Have a disaster preparedness plan and a place to meet/call after a disaster such as a hurricane or earthquake.
- Make sure you have a support system – people you can turn to for assistance.

The Navy knows that you may need assistance from time to time and has created a plethora of services available to assist you during deployment or anytime.

It is one of the beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org>

When you think of emergencies – big or small – you think of the American Red Cross. The Red Cross serves both civilian and military personnel. It sends communications on behalf of family members who are facing emergencies or other important events to members of the U.S. Armed Forces serving all over the world. These communications are delivered around-the-clock, seven days a week, 365 days per year.

When a Sailor is deployed it is possible that bad news will need to be relayed to them. When you need to tell your Sailor significant bad news such as an illness or a death of a family member it is important to use official channels such as the American Red Cross or the command ombudsman.

Do not send emergency information via email or letter as most commands want families to use the American Red Cross for two reasons:

1. The American Red Cross staff verifies information to allow commands to make informed decisions about emergency leave.
2. A Command Chaplain, Commanding Officer, Executive Officer or Command Master Chief provides the information to the Sailor and ensures support is available.

For any Red Cross message to be sent the following information is needed:

- The service members' name.
- Rank.
- Social security number.
- Duty station.

For an illness in the immediate family:

- Name.
- Illness.
- Relationship.
- Whether or not the person who is ill wants the service member notified.

For a death in the immediate family:

- Name of the deceased.
- Relationship.
- When and how death occurred.
- Is the sponsor's presence required or requested?

For birth announcements:

- Mother must personally notify.

In addition to providing services to active duty personnel and their families, the Red Cross also serves members of the National Guard, the Reserves, and their families who reside in nearly every community in America.

Through offices all over the world, the Red Cross, in partnership with Navy Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS), provides emergency financial assistance to those eligible when traveling and not near a military installation, after hours, or on days when NMCRS is not available.

Chaplain

Chaplains play a vital role in helping their fellow sea-service personnel and family members during crucial moments in their lives. They are available 24/7 to provide spiritual guidance and help you "sort through" a variety of issues or concerns. For example, they provide moral support for young people away from home for the first time or deployed, offer support to individuals facing personal or emotional difficulties, and provide spiritual assistance to people from all walks of life.

Individuals often contact chaplains when they don't know where to turn for assistance. The availability and experience of chaplains enables them to be excellent resource persons. Chaplains live and work with the men and women in uniform. As an insider within the military system, their unique role allows them to:

- Make personal visit with military personnel and family members as needed.
- Provide information about various concerns and issues.
- Provide emotional and spiritual support throughout the deployment cycle, at home and in theatre.

- Educate commands about the concerns and needs of IAs and their families.

Many chaplains are trained counselors and they understand the military system. They will be able to refer you to military and local community resources that can help. In addition, chaplains can help individuals find local clergy and places of worship.

Some commands have assigned chaplains. If your command doesn't have an assigned chaplain, contact the nearest military base and ask for the duty chaplain.

Command Family Readiness Group

A Family Readiness Group (FRG) is a group of spouses sponsored by a command that coordinates fun and information activities for members. In addition to spouses, some groups may also include parents, children, and fiancé(e)s as determined by the commanding officer.

Command Family Readiness Groups are called by a number of names:

- Family Support Group.
- Family Support Club.
- Friends and Family Support Group.
- Command Family Association.
- Spouse Group.

Family Readiness Groups may help:

- Prepare for deployments and homecoming.
- Provide family support during deployments or mobilization.
- Help families adjust to challenges and to assist one another in times of personal, unit, or area crises.

Some installations have created IA family support groups where you can meet other family members experiencing similar assignments.

Getting involved with a Family Readiness Group is a great way to get to know other families, to learn more about the Navy and to support your Sailor. To learn about groups contact your command ombudsman.

Command Ombudsman

Ombudsmen are volunteers, appointed by the commanding officer, to serve as an information link between command leadership and Navy families. They are not professional counselors, but they are trained to listen to your questions or problems and to refer you to professionals who can help.

Most ombudsmen publish a newsletter packed with information. Some also have a careline which is a recorded message that is regularly updated with news about your command, Family Readiness Group activities, and local military and community information.

Consider your command ombudsman first when you have a question or concern. They can prevent frustration by pointing you in the right direction to get the information or help you need.

To locate your ombudsman is contact your local Fleet and Family Support Center. You can get their number by going to www.ffsp.navy.mil.

Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC)

The ECRC was set up to help Sailors and families experiencing an IA assignment. The ECRC:

- Provides training on services available for family.
- Sends welcome aboard package.
- Provides updates to commands and ombudsmen as to Sailor and family member status and/or location during mobilization.
- Is primary stateside POC for all theater related family issues.
- Provides conduit for communications with NAVCENT for family issues.
- Moderates Navy Knowledge Online “Family Community of Practice” site.
- Notifies region/parent command when Sailor returns.

To contact the ECRC use their toll free number (877) 364-4302 or visit www.ecrc@navy.mil.

Fleet and Family Support Center

www.ffsp.navy.mil

Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC) are staffed with professional educators and counselors who can provide a wealth of information and services that fall into three categories:

1. Information and referral.
2. Education and training.
3. Counseling.

Types of questions the FFSC can help with include:

- Where can I get help to find a job?
- How can I help my child deal with their mom/dad’s deployment?
- Where can I get information about budgeting, car buying, or saving and investing?
- Who is my command ombudsman and what is their telephone number?
- How do I locate an IA family discussion group?
- Where can I get information about moving to our new duty station?
- We’re having marital problems, where can we get counseling?
- I’m feeling overwhelmed with this deployment, who can I talk to?
- I need help managing stress, where can I go?

- We're expecting our first baby, where can we get information about being parents?
- Where can we get a speaker for the next Family Readiness Group Meeting?

Military One Source

<http://www.militaryonesource.com>

Military One Source is a web site sponsored by the Department of Defense to provide information and resources to Sailors and their families. You must register to access some features.

Military One Source provides articles, links and CDs you can order for free on a variety of topics including:

- Financial.
- Midlife and retirement.
- Addictions and recovery.
- Work.
- Health.
- Parenting and child care.
- Relocation.
- Personal and family readiness.

Military One Source has several useful features:

- The web site is available 24/7.
- Telephone numbers are available 24/7 for individuals to call and talk with a consultant.
- The staff will research a topic and send results.
- Referrals for private counseling sessions and legal consultations are also available.
- Simultaneous translation in more than 150 languages is available.

To talk to a Military One Source consultant:

Stateside: 800-342-9647

Collect from Overseas: 800-3429-6477

(use applicable access codes, 122-001-010 for Japan, S-KT, Singapore and Thailand, 001 for Korea, S-Darcom and 00 for all others.)

Collect from Overseas: 1 484-530-5908.

En español llame al: 1-877-888-0727

TTY/TDD: 1-866-607-6794



Navy Marine Corps Relief Society

<http://www.nmcra.org/services.html>

Navy Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRA) is a non-profit organization staffed primarily by volunteers. Services provided include:

Interest-free loans or grants to deal with emergency needs such as:

- Transportation.
- Funeral expenses.
- Medical/dental bills (patient's share).
- Food, rent, and utilities including deposits.
- Disaster relief assistance.
- Child care expenses.
- Pay problems or delays.
- Essential vehicle repairs.
- Unforeseen family emergencies.

Loans are made to service members. When the service member is deployed a message is sent asking permission to give a loan. When the service member can afford to repay, financial assistance is provided as an interest-free loan. It is normally repaid by allotment. If repayment would cause a hardship, assistance may be provided as a grant and not have to be repaid.

Layettes with over \$100 worth of baby items are also available. Check with your local NMCRA to see if there are income requirements or if recipients are asked to participate in a Budgeting for Baby workshop.

Thrift shops are available at many installations. They re-sell usable clothing, furniture, household goods, and uniforms at very low costs.

Visiting nurse services are available at some local offices to check on a newborn, change bandages, or provide other medical advice and assistance to the homebound.



Personnel Support Detachment

<http://www.pasd.navy.mil>

The Navy's Personnel Support Activity (PSA) is the agency that provides administrative, personnel, pay and transportation support including:

- Defense Eligibility Enrollment System (DEERS) support.
- Family and service member identification cards.
- Transportation services.
- Travel claim processing.
- Transition processing.

Each installation has a local Personnel Support Detachment to locate yours contact the above web site.

TRICARE

www.tricare.osd.mil

TRICARE is the health care program for Sailors and their families. Reservists and National Guardsmen are also eligible for TRICARE coverage when they are on active duty, pre and post mobilization.

The four most common TRICARE programs are:

- TRICARE Prime.
- TRICARE Extra.
- TRICARE Standard (formerly called CHAMPUS).
- TRICARE Reserve Select.

TRICARE provides a dental benefit, a pharmacy program, and TRICARE for Life for most Medicare-eligible uniformed service retirees. There is also a Program for Persons with Disabilities (PFPWD) that can help with some of the costs associated with specialized medical equipment and services. In addition, mental health services are available.

Each TRICARE program has its own eligibility and enrollment requirements. Individuals must be registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) to be eligible for any TRICARE benefits. Enrollment for TRICARE coverage is subject to location, eligibility category, and the specific program requirements. Costs and enrollment fees also differ by program.

Health benefits advisors are available at local TRICARE Service Centers (TSC) or military treatment facilities (MTF) to help with questions regarding health care services or go to the above web site.

Homecoming

One of the best aspects of Navy life is Navy homecomings. Absence really can make the heart grow fonder! Homecomings are different after an IA assignment. Rather than returning with a squadron or ship, IA Sailors generally come back by themselves, often to little fanfare. Some Sailors say this is a bit of a let down, and others are happy not to have to deal with the hoopla. You'll need to get a sense from your Sailor what their individual preferences are for celebrating homecoming.

Expectations

Reunion is an exciting time however; what you plan and the realism of what actually occurs can sometimes be very different. Once your Sailor is back in the states, there is a significant demobilization process including turning in gear, a physical exam, mental health screening and check in with various base departments. Your Sailor will usually receive a period of leave before returning to full duty. Like all separation reunions, you will encounter a period of reintegration where roles and relationships are reshaped.

Returning home after being in a war zone is a process not a single event. Your Sailor may have difficulty adjusting to life after war. Your life will not be exactly as it was before your Sailor's deployment as you both have had different experiences.

Your Sailor spent months in a "hyped-up" emotional state while in a war zone. They may be uncomfortable in large crowds and easily startled by loud noises. They may have trouble trusting anyone. If they witness the deaths of others during their IA assignment they may set up an emotional firewall and keep loved ones' at a distance as a way of protecting themselves from the pain of possibly losing a loved one.

They may not be willing to talk about their experiences while deployed. Don't pry and try not to be shocked by anything your Sailor may tell you. Let them know you'll be there for them.

They may have difficulty sleeping. They may have nightmares or flashbacks. They may drink or self-medicate to avoid feelings or

A great marriage is not when the 'perfect couple' comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences.

– Dave Meurer



thoughts associated with their IA tour. It may take weeks or months for some of these behaviors to occur.

As a family member you may be the first to become aware that your Sailor is experiencing symptoms of post traumatic stress. Post traumatic stress is a reaction to the extreme stress people encounter during threats of danger to themselves or others or the fear of death.

Symptoms may include:

- Depression.
- Loss of interest in work/activities.
- Isolation.
- Anger.
- Sleep problems.
- Survivor guilt.
- Hyper alertness.
- Emotional distance from family.
- High risk behaviors.
- A negative self-image.
- Emotional numbing.
- Distrust of authority.
- Suicidal thoughts.

If you'd like to learn more about what to expect if your Sailor is returning from a combat zone, two helpful, inexpensive and easy to read books are:

1. *Down Range To Iraq and Back* by Bridget C. Cantrell, PH.D and Chuck Dean.
2. *Courage After Fire* by Keith Armstrong, LCSW, Suzanne Best, PH.D and Paula Domenici, PH.D.

Both books offer practical advice to service members and their families, are inexpensive and available from popular books sellers such as Amazon and Barnes and Nobel.

Contact a chaplain, Fleet and Family Support Center, Military One Source or the Veterans Administration for more information or to get assistance for you and your Sailor.

Tips for a Successful Homecoming

- Be realistic. All of your homecoming fantasies may not occur.
- Communicate. Talk about your thoughts and feelings.
- Re-evaluate your financial goals.
- Be slow to criticize.
- Show appreciation for those who have supported you through this deployment.
- Talk with other IAs and their families as you are not the only one readjusting to homecoming.
- Get help if the challenges of returning home get worse instead of better.

Children and Reunion

Reunion is a time of excitement, joy and readjustment. Younger children take their cues about homecoming from you, their caretaker. Older children may have similar feelings as you do. They will be excited, joyous and may feel anxious if they believe they did not live up to their deployed parent's expectations.

Often the parent who has been at home is reluctant to share the responsibility of parenting. It is important for children to see both parents in the caretaking role. It also allows the parent returning from a war zone to experience the innocence, intimacy and joy that caring for their children can provide.

Just as parents need time to reestablish relationships, so do children. It's best for the returning parent to initially not make drastic changes to their children's routine, rules and responsibilities. Children will likely go to the parent who has remained at home with them for the first few days upon their deployed parent's return for permission, questions and assistance.

If possible, plan a few days and have a family vacation at home. Do fun activities as a family. Limit house cleaning and chores to the essentials. Talk, play, listen and enjoy being a family again.

Duty nights can be challenging after an extended deployment as young children may worry that their parent has again left. Older children are usually delighted that their family is reunited even though they may, at times, resent the discipline enforced by having two parents at home.



TOP TIP

At homecoming – talk, play, listen and enjoy being a family again.



Resources

American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org>

Local _____

Fleet and Family Support Center

www.ffsp.navy.mil

Local _____

Base Operator

Local _____

Navy Marine Corps Relief Society

<http://www.nmcrrs.org/services.html>

Local _____

Chaplain

Local _____

Personnel Support Detachment

<http://www.pasas.navy.mil>

Local _____

Command Family Readiness Group

Local _____

TRICARE

<http://www.tricare.mil/>

Local _____

Command Ombudsman

Local _____

Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

<http://ncptsd.kattare.com/ncmain/index.jsp>

Local _____

Command Careline

Local _____

Military One Source

<http://www.militaryonesource.com>

Local _____

Service Members Address

